

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A suture assisting and maintaining apparatus, comprising:
 - a loop suture adapted to be threaded through skin around a wide open wound;
 - a tightening member gathering both ends of the threaded loop suture at one point in order to tighten the threaded loop suture and exert a pressure of wound tightening force evenly on skin;
 - a pulling member for pulling the loop suture in order to tighten the threaded loop suture;
 - a housing member for housing the pulling member and making the loop suture tightened by transformation of a pulling force to a wound tightening ~~force~~ force, the tightening member being adapted to be in contact with a distal end of the housing member when said pulling member pulls the loop suture out of the skin; and
 - a locking member for fixing a position of the pulling member in relation to the housing member constant by moving the pulling member in one-way to maintain the tightened status.
2. (Original) The apparatus as recited in claim 1, wherein the housing member is formed of an elastic member.
3. (Original) The apparatus as recited in claim 1, wherein a scale is marked on the housing member or the tightening member.
4. (Previously Presented) The apparatus as recited in claim 1, wherein the pulling member has a first saw tooth on an outside surface of the pulling member and the locking member has a second saw tooth on an inside surface of the locking member in reverse form of the first saw tooth on the pulling member to check the movement of the pulling

member as one-way and to prevent slippage of the pulling member in an opposite direction after pulling by engagement between the saw teeth of the pulling member and the second saw tooth of the locking member.

5. (Original) The apparatus as recited in claim 1, further comprising a strain gauging means for measuring a strain force of the loop suture.

6. (Original) The apparatus as recited in claim 5, wherein the strain gauging means is formed of an elastic member and connected to the loop suture.

7. (Original) The apparatus as recited in claim 1, further comprising a buffering means for buffering of the strain force loaded on the loop suture.

8. (Original) The apparatus as recited in claim 7, wherein the buffering means is formed of an elastic member and inserted into a predetermined position of the pulling member.

9. (Original) The apparatus as recited in claim 7, wherein the buffering means is formed of an elastic member and inserted into a predetermined position of the housing member.

10. (Original) The apparatus as recited in claim 7, wherein the elastic member is a coil spring.

11. (Original) The apparatus as recited in claim 1, further comprising a loosening means for releasing the over-tightened loop suture by adjusting the position of the pulling member.

12. (Original) The apparatus as recited in claim 11, wherein the loosening means includes:

- a female nut formed at one end of the housing member; and
- a loosening bolt formed on the locking member.

13. (Previously Presented) The apparatus as recited in claim 4, further including a loosening means with a cover having a third saw tooth on an inside surface of the cover, wherein the third saw teeth is engaged or disengaged with the first saw tooth on the pulling member by opening the cover from the loosening means in order to adjust the position of the pulling member.

14. (Original) The apparatus as recited in claim 11, wherein the loosening means includes:

- a winding screw for winding the pulling member in order to tighten the loop suture; and

- a winding screw handle for being connected to the winding screw and providing a torque to wind the pulling member.

15. (Previously Presented) The apparatus as recited in claim 1, wherein said loop suture is a multiple punctured purse-string type loop suture.

16. (Previously Presented) The apparatus as recited in claim 1, wherein said tightening member defines an interface between skin and the apparatus for distribution and buffering of even-pressure.

17. (New) A method for suture assisting and maintaining, comprising the steps of:

- threading a loop suture through skin around a wide open wound;

- threading ends of the loop suture through holes in a tightening member that gathers both ends of the threaded loop suture at one point to tighten the threaded loop suture and exert a pressure of wound tightening force evenly on the skin;

- attaching the ends of the loop suture to a pulling member;

- pulling the loop suture into a housing member using the pulling member, the tightening member in contact with and between a distal end of the housing member and the skin to gather the threaded loop suture at one point and to tighten the threaded loop suture; and

locking the pulling member with a locking member fixing a position of the pulling member in relation to the housing member to maintain the tightened status.